by loans in the open market or by other means, should not be encouraged. The rate of interest on these loans has been reduced from 6¼ per cent. to 6 per cent. per annum from the current year as a further measure of encouragement.

19. Forests. The net revenue from 'forests' has risen from Rs. 3,55,375 in 1098 to Rs. 5,70,911 in 1099; but the timber market continues to be very dull and no correct forecast can yet be made of our forest finance. The stock of timber in the depôts has been brought down, by a careful regulation of fellings, from 12,61,889 cubic feet at the close of 1096 to 7,06,239 cubic feet at the close of 1099; and efforts have not been spared to secure advantageous offers for timber that is likely to deteriorate through long keeping and exposure.

20. Deputy Conservator Mr. K. S. Narayana Aiyangar, who was working as Forest Utilisation Officer during 1099, explored several avenues for the discovery of fresh markets for the disposal of our surplus timber, and negotiations are in progress which are likely to materialise in the probable disposal of our surplus building timbers and of our soft woods the bulk of which is now going to waste. Mr. Narayana Aiyangar investigated also the uses of several species of soft woods and minor forest produce which are not now put to any use; and his survey of reed-growing areas in the Pattanapuram taluk has resulted in the reeds in an area near the Punalur Paper Mills being leased to the management of those Mills. The idea of a rope-way from Ramakkal Mettu for the easy transport of the timber of the Kallar valley on the High Ranges to the Madura plains is under examination and should, if feasible, make the extraction of timber from that valley more attractive and profitable.

21. In my last year's address, I stated how, by the opening of a temporary Forest College at Quilon to train a large number of Rangers and Deputy Rangers, the efficiency of the superior executive staff was enhanced; and I also referred to the opening of a school at Konni, in Kumbham, 1099, for the training of Forest Guards. Two batches of Forest Guards have already been trained in this latter institution and a third batch are being now trained.

22. The *taungya* system of teak plantation, introduced for the first time in 1096, under which the area proposed for plantation is leased for a year or two for the alternate cultivation of paddy and cereals in return for clearing the ground and planting and rearing thereon teak stumps supplied by the department, has been found to be both popular and economical. Since the introduction of this system, the cost of planting teak per acre has gone down from Rs. 20·9 in 1096 to Rs. 2·6 in 1099; and when it is remembered that the area freshly planted is nearly 600 acres per year, the economy secured will be found to be not inconsiderable.

23. Some efforts have recently been made to train the water-ways in North and Central Travancore, so essential for the cheap transport not of timber only but of other merchandise as well. These efforts, however, being neither adequate nor systematic, the Government have sanctioned the deputation of an experienced Executive Engineer for investigating the problem of river navigation in the State and suggesting measures for its improvement.

24. As many as 17 important reserves have been pending settlement for a long term of years and it has been found from experience that the Division Peishkars are unable to attend to the work of Forest Settlement along with their other multifarious duties. In view to the importance of avoiding further delay in the settlement of these reserves in the interests of forest conservancy, the Government have decided to get this work done by the Superintendent of Survey as soon as his additional duties in connection with the ensuing Legislative Council elections are over; and it is hoped that the long-delayed settlement of these reserves will be completed by this officer with promptitude.

25. The committee appointed by the Government in 1098 to enquire into the question of giving full proprietary rights over royal trees standing on registered holdings to the owners thereof has completed its labours and its report is shortly expected.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly